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NEWSLETTER

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Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on ACHS 2021 program

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have resulted in a number of ACHS meetings and presentations in Sydney, at St Patrick’s Church Hill, and in Melbourne, at the Yarra Theological Union Study Centre, being cancelled. Notably the Sydney July and August meetings that had been placed in earlier Newsletters were cancelled. The Christmas Mass and Lunch have also been cancelled. It has also caused the late printing and circulation of this newsletter.

To keep members connected with their interest in Catholic History and the Society the ACHS President Dr Carmody has developed a program of presentations that are planned to be delivered on the internet via Zoom. It is hoped that these sessions will be recorded and placed on the ACHS Home-page.

Revised ACHS Program for September, October and November 2021 to be presented via Zoom

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
19 September	Wentworth’s dream of a secular University thwarted: how Sydney University became a decidedly Protestant institution	Dr John Carmody President ACHS. Formerly UNSW Physiologist and music writer. Currently contributor to <i>the Australian Dictionary of Biography</i> and music lecturer.
17 October	Catholic New Testament research and the significance of the Encyclical, <i>Divino afflante Spiritu</i> , and Vatican II	Dr Bruce Kaye Adjunct Research Professor, Centre for Public and Contextual Theology, Charles Sturt University, Canberra Formerly: Master, New College, University of NSW
21 November	Catholic archives: are they history?	Dr Odhran O’Brien Archdiocesan Archivist Perth and Dr Colin Barr School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History University of Aberdeen

- These Zoom sessions will be presented at the usual time (2.00pm).
- Members wishing to join the zoom sessions should register their details and intent ASAP by email to: achsmetings@gmail.com They will be sent a zoom invitation and login details.
- We hope to record these sessions and post them on the ACHS website.
- Visit the ACHS website [<http://www.australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au>] for information, etc.

NOTE: The information above is correct at the time of publication however please check the program on the ACHS website [<http://www.australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au>] for information, features and any changes.

Sydney Meeting, Sunday 16 May 2021.

Presenter: Fr John Crothers Formerly PP Penshurst and Peakhurst and author of *The Clergy Club*

Topic: The Catholic clergy – prisoners of history

Fr John Crothers’ talk on 16 May grew out of his passion for Church reform. The talk referred to his book ‘*The Clergy Club*’. Crothers’ view is that the bishops have seen history as linear rather than as dynamic. He comments that the Church today looks like the past, old and outdated. He argues that it is a short step from seeing the clergy as removed from others in society to seeing the clergy as superior to others in society. In this regard, he referenced Bishop

Tim Costelloe, speaking of an attitude of superiority or aloofness. John Crothers intends the focus to be service to everyone equally and the model he espouses is that the Holy Spirit comes down on the Church at every moment of church history.

Crothers commends the message of Pope Francis: we’re not just role playing history. Apply the message of Jesus today. Crothers wants to negate the view of

the bishops that God has made it this way. He believes that revelation continues. Otherwise, knowledge is only to be found in the past. Citing the Galileo chapter in history, he argues that it is difficult for the bishops to embrace change because it is hard to revisit past understandings, resulting in a tendency to keep the status quo. Regarding the Plenary Council, he stated that most issues that people want to discuss are off the agenda. (Listen to what the spirit is saying <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/reports/>).

Crothers' vision is that history should be a springboard to leap into the future. He is saddened that Mass attendance has diminished over the last 30 years, with no apparent response from the bishops. He spoke joyfully about Pope Francis' change to canon law so that women could become acolytes but saw no recognition of this change by the bishops. However, he sees reason for optimism and believes that the bishops will eventually welcome the guidance and goodwill of the Catholic laity.

Many questions were stimulated. Some examples follow.

Q. In relation to professional identity formation, to what degree does celibacy and the notion of 'the sacred person' make the priest different? Does this make the role lonely?

A. These are important factors. Priesthood is a fabulous role. But you cannot let it close in on you. A lot of priests support women's ordination but they will never say it publicly. One of the good things to come out of the Royal Commission is that every priest has to have a supervisor. If you're trying to change people, you have to be able to offer other options. The bishops think the laity need to be shown what to do.

Q. Pope Francis' comments on the church structure in society have been ignored by bishops, priests and the Catholic Press. We are reaching a crisis in numbers of priests. Pat Power in 'Late Call' said (<https://soundcloud.com/cgcatholic/bishop-pat-power-talks-about-his-new-book-late-call>), that the broader scope in the late vocations seminary produced priests who were successful in the Canberra Goulburn diocese.

A. We need to change the model. We need to draw more broadly than on single men

Q. Does clericalism appear in other churches?

A. It's not just churches. It's all institutions where the people with power need things to remain the same. For priests, if you speak out, you are not part of the plan of the Diocese. It's world-wide. The reform movement is about restoring trust after the Royal Commission.

Anne Power (Councillor)

Sydney Meeting, Sunday 20 June 2021.

Presenter: Dr Jennifer Gribble Honorary Associate Professor Department of English, University of Sydney...

Topic: Biblical history in the novels of Dickens

Dickens was explicit about his intention to promote 'the great truths of scripture'. The steady march of secularism and the hegemony of literary theory helps to account for the comparative neglect of the question of Dickens and religion. Despite the challenges to biblical authority from the Higher Criticism and pre-Darwinian evolutionary science as he begins to write, he affirms the Bible's role in the popular culture of Victorian England. His novels sustain a continuing thread of biblical allusion. Scenes in which the Bible is being read aloud are repeated from novel to novel. As a collection of narratives that form a history, the Judeo-Christian grand narrative – Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Redemption – not only structures his novels, but also provides ethical guidelines and sign-posts: Biblical story lines, images, parables, and typology, form the ground on which he stands to appeal to the conscience of 'a Christian people'. *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) associates the young author's inaugural creative moment with the creation of the world, and engages wittily and knowledgeably with contemporary creation theories. While the significance of the Bible is indicated in the early novels by conventionally pious gesture rather than strenuous theological thinking, by the time he comes to write *A Christmas Carol*, in 1843, he begins more fully to grasp the structuring potential

of biblical history for his writing. An enduring target of Dickens's satire is the Benthamite Utilitarianism that holds sway in the workhouses and the New Poor Laws. Ebenezer Scrooge and his late business partner Marley embody this economic rationalism. Dozing before his meagre fire, Scrooge sees Marley's ghostly face superimposed on the biblical history depicted in the tiles that surround his fireplace. Victorian society, Dickens suggests, is suppressing the message and the meaning of the Christmas narrative. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and to Come, teach him to connect these three temporalities, bringing him wholeness of being, and reinforcing the typological and Eucharistic dimensions of Dickens's thinking. In his next novel, *Dombey and Son* (1847), Mr Dombey also represents economic man, but in its mercantilist, evangelical, and imperialist manifestations. The sin of pride, inflated by the birth of his long-awaited son and heir, is represented in his personalized appropriation of the entire Judeo-Christian narrative. Allusions to Genesis, the Psalms, and the Sermon on the Mount, tacitly admonish him, while the novel's several death scenes set the starkness and brevity of human life within the vast time of human history, on the one hand, and the scarcely-believable speeding up of time brought by the coming of the railways, on the other. Dickens's

commitment to redeeming London's 'fallen women' in the founding of Urania House as he completes this novel reflects his 'social gospel', in action, as in his novels. The social 'fall' of the prostitute Alice Marwood is connected with the fall of her mortal body, as the Bible is read aloud to her by Harriet Carker, and made compelling by the reader's loving support. So, too, the fall of the House of Dombey brings about his redemption by the steadfast love of his outcast daughter, Florence. In 1853, in *Bleak House*, Dickens further explores the shunning and shaming of fallen women as a culturally apposite example of Victorian England's misappropriations of the doctrine of original sin and the idea of the fall in the Judeo-Christian narrative. (Summary provided by Professor Gribble).

perhaps the Paraclete in human form. Jenny was asked about the two sons sent to Australia, and she referred to the writing of Tom Keneally. *The Life of our Lord* written for his children as a simplified New Testament based mainly on St Luke was not designed for publication. Jenny was asked "What would Dickens be writing about today?" She suggested: domestic violence, poverty, and attitudes towards refugees.

Dickens' private life was queried, especially his attitude to his wife and the affair with Ellen Ternan. The parable of the prodigal son is referenced in the plot of *Great Expectations* when Pip returns to the forge. Finally the sacrifice of Sydney Carton on *Tale of Two Cities* was commented on as epitomising Christ's teaching. (Helen Scanlon)

Questions and Answers: The first questions were about *Little Dorrit* who symbolised the incarnation or

MacGinley Award

The ACHS Council is reviewing the conditions of the MacGinley Award. Full details of the revised award will be published on the ACHS website.

200th anniversary of Catholic education in Australia

On 18 February 2021 the Australian Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter acknowledging the 200th anniversary of Catholic education in Australia. The statement mentions that "the first official Catholic school in Australia founded in October 1820 by Irish Catholic priest Fr John Therry." It is understood that it was located on Hunter Street in Parramatta and taught 31 students. George Marley (also identified as George Morley) was the teacher. The school transferred to the site of the present St Patrick's Cathedral in 1837. In 1875 the Marist Brothers began to staff the school. Parramatta Marist High School, now located in Westmead and St Patrick's Primary, Parramatta trace their origins back to that first school. There are claims that at least two other Catholic schools operated in New South Wales before the school at which George Marley taught, however both schools were closed by 1818 and their status as "Catholic Schools" has been challenged.

An Ignatian Year being celebrated

The 20th of May 2021 marked the 500th anniversary of Ignatius the soldier being struck by a cannonball and beginning the process of conversion which would ultimately lead to the foundation of the Society of Jesus. The 12 March 2022 will mark the 400th anniversary of the canonization of St Ignatius. From May 2021 until July 2022, the Society of Jesus will be celebrating an Ignatian Year.

Centenary of the first woman elected to an Australian Parliament

On 12 March 1921 Edith Cowan was elected to the Legislative Assembly in the Parliament of Western Australia for the seat of West Perth. She thus became the first woman elected to a parliament in Australia. She defeated the Attorney General, Thomas Draper, who had introduced the legislation that enabled women to stand for parliament. She was defeated in 1924.

The Legion of Mary was founded on 7 September 1921

The Legion of Mary was founded by Frank Duff on 7 September 1921 in Dublin. The Legion currently exists in about 170 countries, including Australia, and has several million members. On 27 March 2014, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, delivered the decree in which the Legion was recognized by the Holy See as International Association of the Faithful

September 17 marks the 700th anniversary of the death of Dante Alighieri

Dante Alighieri was a medieval Italian poet and philosopher whose writings, particularly *Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy) had a significant impact on western literature. *Divina Commedia* was written in Italian at a time when most writing was in Latin. It is regarded by many as the foundational work of Italian literature. Another one of Dante's works is *Vita Nuova* (The New life) includes the story of his unrequited romantic love for Beatrice Portinari. Beatrice also has a role in *Divina Commedia*. There are many quotes one could draw from Dante's works. One that contains a message that I suspect many school teachers have tried to pass onto their students but have used less elegant language: "You were not made to behave like brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge".

Death of Fr Larry Nemer SVD

Fr Larry Nemer (Lawrence Niemierowicz) SVD died on Wednesday 9 June. He was founding Convenor of the Melbourne Chapter of the ACHS. Fr Matthew Beckmann OFM, the current Convenor of the Melbourne Chapter, pointed out that Fr Larry was a gifted teacher, guide and mentor for many in the area of Church History. Fr Beckmann also noted that June 9 is the memorial of St Ephraem, a man who, like Larry, left his homeland and travelled to another country as a missionary and teacher.

Fr Larry was born and raised in Chicago and entered the SVD novitiate in Techny, Illinois, on September 8, 1950. Fr Larry's principal form of ministry was teaching in theological schools, including 10 years at Techny, Illinois and 20 years at Catholic Theological Union in Hyde Park, Chicago. After moving to Australia, he taught from 1990 to 2020 at the Yarra Theological Union/University of Divinity in Melbourne, with a break of six years when he was President of the Missionary Institute London. His graduate education in Church History and Mission Studies was done at the Gregorian University (Rome), The Catholic University of America (Washington, DC) and Cambridge University (UK).

A Requiem Mass for Larry was celebrated at the Chapel of the Divine Word Missionaries in Marsfield on Friday, 18 June 2021. We pray that Larry will rest in peace.

Death of Dr Graham English

Dr Graham English died on Tuesday 15 June. He was an ACHS member and frequently attended meetings. Graham had been a Senior lecturer at Australian Catholic University Strathfield. His area was Religious Education. Dr Garaty, an ACHS Councillor, mentioned that Graham was of great assistance to her while she was a PhD student. Graham also made contributions to the Catholica Forum on the Internet. A Requiem Mass for Graham was offered in the ACU Chapel at Strathfield on 22 June 2021. We pray that Graham will rest in peace.

Death of Fr Brian Maher

Fr Maher was a priest in the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese. In addition to his many roles and his history related activities were authoring many books including *Planting the Celtic Cross* (1997) and several parish histories. He was awarded an OAM in 2009 the citation for which referred to his historical activities and in 2011 Archbishop Carroll appointed him as "*Archdiocesan Historian indefinitely*". May he rest in peace

Note re publication of Journal:

On 2 December 2018 the Australian Catholic Historical Society and ATF (Australia) Ltd/ATF Press entered into an agreement whereby ATF Press would publish, print and distribute the journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society for five years with an option to extend the agreement for a further five years. The Australian Catholic Historical Society would have editorial control and ATF Press would be the publisher and distributor of the journal.

ATF Press published and distributed the Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society for 2018, 2019 and 2020. At first the agreement worked well but the Australian Catholic Historical Society became dissatisfied and issues arose between the parties regarding the production of the journal.

ATF Press did not wish to rescind the agreement but wished to continue providing the services in accordance with the agreement. Both they and the Australian Catholic Historical Society received positive comments from a variety of sources, including members of the Australian Catholic Historical Society, about the quality and aesthetics of the latest, 2020, edition.

The Australian Catholic Historical Society wishes to rescind the agreement and so this process has begun and ATF Press, reluctantly, will have no further role as publisher or distributor of the journal in the future.'

(This is an agreed statement between ACHS and ATF)

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